



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Marine Fisheries Service

P.O. Box 21668

Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

October 19, 2004

Dear Kodiak Set Gillnet Permit Holder:

After a two-year hiatus following the initial season in 2002 of monitoring marine mammal and sea bird interactions in the Kodiak set gillnet fishery, the Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program (AMMOP) will return in 2005 to complete the second year of the planned two-year study. The marine resource consulting firm, MRAG Americas, Inc, has been awarded the contract to operate the program in 2005. MRAG Americas has an accomplished history in scientific marine resource consulting, including much work done in the field of observer programs, and we look forward to working with them next summer. Bryan Belay, formerly of Data Contractors, Inc, (DCI) will be the operations manager for the 2005 season. Bryan was the operations manager with DCI for the 2002 AMMOP Kodiak program, and many of you already know him. We welcome Bryan back and expect his successful work in 2002 will make next season's monitoring a success as well.

In April 2004, a draft report with the results from the data collected in 2002 was mailed to Kodiak set gillnet permit holders registered in 2004. NMFS expects to have the opportunity to present these data in a forum at ComFish in March 2005 in Kodiak. We invite your attendance and participation at this presentation. There also will be opportunity at this meeting for you to provide comments on the draft report, as well as on any aspect of the 2002 program operations. We would like to hear from you about what you felt worked in 2002 and where improvements in 2005 might be realized. Further details on this meeting will be provided prior to ComFish.

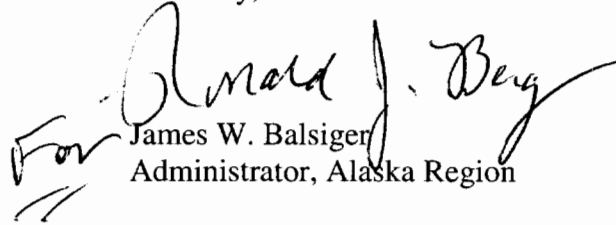
The objectives of the program in 2005 will remain as they were in 2002. NMFS is required to monitor the effects of commercial fisheries on marine mammal populations. The AMMOP provides valuable information for this monitoring in the state-managed salmon fisheries in Alaska, and is fully funded by NMFS. Observer coverage in Kodiak in 2005 also will be similar to the coverage seen in 2002. The coverage will be allocated by month into six areas on Kodiak, maintaining an average coverage rate of approximately five percent of all set gillnet effort. An estimated 15 observers are expected to be deployed throughout the fishery during peak fishing times, and any one permit may have the chance of being randomly observed approximately one or two days per month.

We were very pleased with the broad cooperation in 2002 from the set gillnet fishermen. This cooperation helped the program collect high quality data, which in turn, helps provide a more accurate assessment of the interaction of marine mammals and seabirds with the fishery. I am grateful for permit holder involvement in past meetings and taking time to discuss the program. It has made a positive contribution to the quality of data we collect, minimizes the



impacts on fishermen, and improves safety. For more information on the AMMOP, please contact Bridget Mansfield, AMMOP coordinator, at (907) 586-7642 or visit the AMMOP website for periodic updates: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/observers/mmop.htm>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Balsiger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James W. Balsiger
Administrator, Alaska Region